Hill Battle Shaping Up Over SACB

Post 5/28/72

By Carl C. Craft
Associated Press

After two decades of dispute over the government's hunt for subversives, Congress is ready for a new battle over federal loyalty and security activities.

The Rules Committee has voted to send two controversial bills to the floor for a House decision on the fate of the Subversive Activities Control Board.

The House Internal Security Committee voted 5-to-1 last month to recommend an administration-endorsed bill by Rep. John M. Ashbrook (R-Ohio) which would let the President expand SACB's powers and give legislative support to President Nixon's ideas for boosting the board's authority under the 1950 Internal Security Act.

In approving Ashbrook's bill, the committee set aside a measure backed by Chairman Richard H. Ichord (D-Mo.) to abolish SACB and set up a "constitutional oath support" law with new machinery to screen federal job applicants on loyalty and security grounds.

The Rules Committee decided to send the Ashbrook bill to the House floor with the Ichord bill to be considered as a substitute. A vote is slated Tuesday.

In its majority report supporting the Ashbrook bill, the Internal Security Committee said "maintenance of a current and reasonably comprehensive attorney general's list of subversive organizations is indispensable to the efficient operation of the federal civilian employee loyalty and security program."

SACB did virtually nothing for months after its power to hunt, register and publicize Communist groups was overruled by the Supreme Court. Last July, President Nixon issued an executive order delegating to the board a new function of determining the character of subversive groups.